

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the Proposed Action, alternative 1, alternative 2, and the no action alternative. The proposed action was requested for emergency drought assistance under the Reclamation Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991, Public Law 102-250.

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action consists of obtaining federal funding and drilling an observation well and a production well which would include installing turnouts on the existing road, constructing drill pad areas and pump house, and establishing a temporary staging area. Reclamation would provide funding for the production well installation for the Pueblo of Taos and other activities will be funded by other agencies. The location of this proposed activity is shown on Map 1 (Appendix 6.2) and photographs of the area are shown in Appendix 6.1. The proposed well is located in Taos County, New Mexico directly off Little Deer Horn Road in the Taos Pueblo (Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates N36° 26.124' W105° 32.896') with a delivery point GPS coordinates N36° 26.118', W105° 22.898'. The contractor would construct a 250± foot deep well with a 10 inch casing to provide supplemental water. The cost of the proposed project includes a pump with a capacity of 440 ± gallons per minute.

Currently there is access to the proposed well site for the drilling rig along Little Deer Horn Road. Additional roads would not be needed for construction but drilling pads will need to be constructed. Less than 400 feet of power line (underground installation) would be required to provide a three phase power supply for the new pump house (approximately 10'x 10'), which would be surrounded by a 6 foot chain link fence for security. A staging area during the construction phase would be required to park equipment. The length of this staging area would be an additional 50 feet from the existing well road, with limited need for contouring. The area expected to be cleared for the drilling pad will be 1/3 acre. The total area potentially disturbed by construction would be approximately 1 acre, is flat, and was previously farmed with crops. Any drilling or water quality related permits would be the responsibility of the tribe and/or contractor to obtain, including the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general permit. This NPDES general permit would apply to this project because the total project area is approximately one acre. A limited number of plant species would be disturbed but are considered plentiful in the area. Most of these plants would be non-native trees and some grasses and weeds. Chinese elms, woods rose, chokecherry, aspen and cottonwood trees were also identified on the project site or in the construction area.

2.2 ALTERNATIVE 1: DIFFERENT SITE

This alternative involves drilling a well at another site known as One Tree Area off Spider Rock Road (GPS coordinates N36° 25.350', W105° 33.157'). This proposed alternative was not considered reasonable or prudent because the depth to groundwater was too deep compared to the preferred well to provide a good source of water and therefore not as cost effective. This



alternative does not meet the purpose and need for action and will no longer be assessed throughout the document.

2.3 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action alternative is “the future without the federal project”. It consists of Reclamation not providing any funds and not drilling the wells. Without Reclamation assistance, current conditions will exist with the Pueblo of Taos searching for supplemental water sources elsewhere to avoid continued water shortages in future drought years. It is also likely that it will create additional hardship (physical and economical) on the community.

Table 1
Summary of Resource Effects by Alternative

Affected Resource	No Action	Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)
Water Supply	No direct effect on area water supplies.	Potential sustainable source of water supply for drought relief
Land	No Effect	Temporary effect ; approximately one acre of ground disturbance during construction phase
Water/Hydrology	Loss of livestock due to drought conditions, inferior fire protection and construction	Potential source of water, 10' ± to groundwater with no interruption to surrounding wells expected.
Vegetation	Loss of crops	Potentially provide long-term benefits through the provision of additional water supplies to the Pueblo
Wildlife	No Effect	Short-term disturbance during drilling activities; long-term displacement of wildlife at the well site and disbursement of wildlife to adjacent, widespread habitat.
Social Considerations	Loss of income due to no crops being farmed	Potentially provide long-term benefits through the provision of additional water supplies to the Pueblo
Cultural Resources	No Effect	No effect. Previously disturbed area, once farmland.
Threatened and Endangered Species	No Effect	No effect. No known occurrences of listed species in the projects sites, no critical habitats important to these species present.
Indian Trust Assets	No Effect	No adverse effect. Supplementing drought relief water supplies by installing a well will help develop the Pueblos' water supply and strengthen their water rights, which are trust assets. The project will be constructed on Pueblo land and the Pueblo is in support of this project.
Environmental Justice	No Effect	No Effect
Cumulative Effects	No Effect	No adverse effects anticipated.

